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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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REVISED BY JOHN SIMMS
DATE
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To: The Secretary

Through: C - Mr. Nimetz

From: L - Lee R. Marks

Congressional Investigation of Tragedy in Guyana

The House International Relations Committee has been investigating the murder of Congressman Ryan in Guyana. We have given the Committee all of our cables, memoranda, and other documents relating to the Peoples Temple, responded in writing to 13 questions posed by Chairman Zablocki, and permitted the HIRC staff to question Dick McCoy, our former Consul in Georgetown.

The HIRC staff has also interviewed Mark Lane, and a large number of surviving members of the Peoples Temple. Staff investigators are now conducting interviews in San Francisco.

The Committee is apparently planning a comprehensive investigation into the Peoples Temple movement in Guyana and the Department's relationship with the Temple.

McCoy has been interviewed three times, for more than 12 hours, and has impressed the staff investigators favorably. McCoy will have a final interview later this month.

Chairman Zablocki told Counselor Nimetz that the Committee appreciated the very full cooperation of the Department in the inquiry.

The staff has focused on an exchange of cables in June 1978 (Tab 1). A cable from the Embassy noted that, as a practical matter, the settlement at Jonestown was outside the effective control of the Guyanese Government.

The Embassy asked whether it might approach the Government and request that it exercise greater administrative jurisdiction over Jonestown. We responded that, absent evidence of lawlessness or a request for assistance from an American citizen, the requested approach could be construed as U.S. Government interference. The staff investigators have asked for a written explanation of the basis of that advice.

We expect the staff to complete the investigation by late January with a report issued by mid-February. No hearings are presently scheduled. Although the Chairman apparently is not inclined to conduct hearings, he is under pressure from members of the Committee and other members of Congress to do so.

Attachment

Exchange of Cables.

cc: H - Mr. Atwood
ARA - Mr. Bushnell
CA - Mr. Gise

L/ARA:TFortune
L:LRMarks/C:MNimetz

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6946
LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GEORGETOWN 1815
E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CPAS, CASC, GY
SUBJECT: PEOPLES TEMPLE AND THE COMMUNITY AT JONESTOWN
1. DISCUSSION. AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC, PRESS AND CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST HAS BEEN FOCUSED, OVER THE LAST YEAR, ON THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE SETTLEMENT AT JONESTOWN. LOCATED IN A REMOTE PART OF NORTHWEST GUYANA, THIS AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY CONSISTS OF A GROUP OF AMERICAN CITIZENS THOUGHT TO NUMBER IN EXCESS OF 1000 WHO HAVE IMMIGRATED TO GUYANA FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF THE U.S. THE PREPONDERANCE OF ATTENTION HAS TURNED AROUND THE QUESTION OF THE WELFARE AND WHEREABOUTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY RAISED BY THEIR NEXT OF KIN IN THE U.S., EITHER DIRECTLY OR BY USING THE INTERMEDIARY OF VARIOUS SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN.
2. RESPONDING TO THIS INTEREST, THE EMBASSY HAS ESTABLISHED A PROCEDURE WHEREBY ONE OF THE CONSULAR OFFICERS VISITS JONESTOWN ON A QUARTERLY BASIS TO PERFORM ROUTINE CONSULAR FUNCTIONS AND TO COMMUNICATE WITH VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY WHO MAY HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF SPECIFIC INQUIRIES. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BECAUSE OF ITS REMOTE LOCATION, TRAVEL TO JONESTOWN FROM GEORGETOWN AND BACK REQUIRES SOME THREE TO FOUR DAYS USING THE UNCERTAIN COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT FACILITIES
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AVAILABLE. TRAVEL TO AND FROM THE SITE CAN BE ACCOMPLISHED IN ONE DAY BUT THIS REQUIRES THAT AN AIRCRAFT BE CHARTERED AND THAT GROUND TRANSPORT FROM THE NEAREST AIRSTRIP BE PROVIDED BY THE NEAREST GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE.) SO FAR THERE HAVE BEEN THREE SUCH VISITS AND THE PROCEDURE SEEMS TO BE FUNCTIONING SATISFACTORILY.
3. DURING THE CONSULAR VISITS IT HAS BEEN OBSERVED THAT THE LOCAL GUYANESE ADMINISTRATION EXERCISES LITTLE OR NO CONTROL OVER THE JONESTOWN COMMUNITY, AND THAT THE SETTLEMENT'S AUTONOMY SEEMS VIRTUALLY TOTAL. THIS IS DUE TO A VARIETY OF REASONS WHICH INCLUDE THE FACT THAT THE AREA IN QUESTION IS REMOTE AND THUS THE GOVERNMENT'S RATHER PRIMITIVE ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERY IS ALREADY OVERSTRAINED BY ITS OBLIGATIONS TO THE GUYANESE CITIZENS LIVING IN THE REGION, AS WELL AS AN UNDERSTANDABLE DIS-
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INTEREST ON THE PART OF THE LOCAL OFFICIALS TO BOTHER WITH AN APPARENTLY SELF-SUFFICIENT COMMUNITY OF NON-GUYANESE WHO OBVIOUSLY ARE NOT ACTIVELY SEEKING ANY EXTENSIVE CONTACT WITH THE GUYANESE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THEIR SETTLEMENT IS LOCATED.

4. WHAT WE HAVE, THEREFORE, IS A COMMUNITY OF AMERICAN CITIZENS EXISTING AS A SELF-CONTAINED AND SELF-GOVERNING UNIT IN A FOREIGN LAND AND WHICH, FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, IS FURNISHING TO THE RESIDENTS ALL OF THE COMMUNITY SERVICES SUCH AS CIVIL ADMINISTARTION, POLICE AND FIRE PROTECTION, EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, ETC., NORAMLLY PROVIDED BY A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT WITHIN ITS TERRITORY.

5. GIVEN THE NATURE OF MANY OF THE INQUIRIES, BOTH

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PRIVATE AND CONGRESSIONAL, CONCERNING THE WELFARE/WHEREABOUTS OF VARIOUS MEMBERS OF THE RESIDENTS OF JONESTOWN, AS WELL AS MANY OF THE ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE PRESS WHICH HAVE ALLEGED THAT INDIVIDUALS WERE BEING HELD IN THE COMMUNITY AGAINST THEIR WILL, THE LACK OF ANY OBJECTIVE ELECTED OR APPOINTED POLITICAL PRESENCE IN JONESTOWN RAISES A LEGAL QUESTION WHICH THIS MISSION IS NOT QUALIFIED TO ANSWER.

6. THE EMBASSY IS NOT, OF COURSE, IN A POSITION TO EXERCISE ANY CONTROL OVER PRIVATE AMERICAN CITIZENS; HOWEVER, PRIVATE AMERICANS TRAVELING TO OR RESIDENT IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY ARE EXPECTED TO OBSERVE AND CONFORM TO THE LAWS OF THE HOST GOVERNMENT. CONVERSELY, CAN THE HOST GOVERNMENT BE OBLIGED TO EXTEND ITS GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL AND THE PROTECTION OF ITS LEGAL SYSTEM OVER AN INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP OF ALIENS RESIDING WITHIN ITS TERRITORY?

7. RECOMMENDATION: IT IS REQUESTED THAT THE OFFICE OF THE LEGAL ADVISER REVIEW THE SITUATION DESCRIBED ABOVE, AS WELL AS OTHER PERTINENT DATA CONCERNING THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE AND THE JONESTOWN COMMUNITY WHICH ARE AVAILABLE IN CA/SCS IN THE DEPARTMENT. IF, AFTER SUCH REVIEW, AND ASSUMING THAT THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION POSED IN THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPH IS AFFIRMATIVE, IT IS REQUESTED THAT WE BE INSTRUCTED TO APPROACH THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA AT AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL TO DISCUSS THE PEOPLE'S TEMPLE COMMUNITY AND REQUEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXERCISE NORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE JURISDICTION OVER THE COMMUNITY, PARTICULARLY TO INSURE THAT ALL OF ITS RESIDENTS ARE INFORMED AND UNDERSTAND THAT THEY ARE SUBJECT TO THE LAWS AND AUTHORITY OF THE GOG AND THAT THEY ENJOY THE PROTECTION OF THE GUYANESE LEGAL SYSTEM.

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SUBJECT: PEOPLES TEMPLE AND THE COMMUNITY AT JONESTOWN
REF: GEORGETOWN 1815

1. DEPARTMENT CAN APPRECIATE THE UNIQUENESS OF THE SITUATION DESCRIBED IN REF TEL AND THE PROBLEMS POST HAS ENCOUNTERED IN ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH THIS SITUATION.

2. WE AGREE WITH POST'S POSITION SET FORTH IN PARAGRAPH 6 OF REF TEL AND CONCUR THAT HOST GOVERNMENT HAS GOVERNMENTAL JURISDICTION OVER U.S. CITIZENS AND OTHER ALIENS RESIDING WITHIN ITS BOUNDARIES. DEPARTMENT ASSUMES THAT BOTH THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT AND THE LEADER OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE ARE AWARE THAT THE COMMUNITY IS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE GOG AND THAT ALL MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE SUBJECT TO THE LAWS AND AUTHORITY OF THE GOG. DEPARTMENT AT PRESENT OF VIEW THAT ANY ACTION INITIATED BY

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THE EMBASSY TO APPROACH THE GOG CONCERNING MATTERS RAISED IN REF TEL COULD BE CONSTRUED BY SOME AS U.S. GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE. UNLESS AMCIT MEMBER OR FAMILY REQUESTS ASSISTANCE OR THERE IS EVIDENCE OF LAWLESSNESS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF JONESTOWN. VANCE
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